

 **Discussion Point**

Consider what the world will be like in 40 years' time.

What do you think it will be like? How would you like it to be?

What has influenced your thoughts and beliefs?

 **Activity**

Research and identify local services or resources that can help you to embed sustainability into your program and practice.

 **Activity**

Calculate your service's ecological footprint. (You can calculate it online by searching for the Ecological Footprint Calculator at www.wwf.org.au.)

What aspects of your current operation or practices could you change in order to reduce your ecological footprint?

Are there practical steps you can take right now, to immediately make a difference? Also, think about and note some long term goals your service can work towards.

 **Discussion Point**

How would you respond to a child that asks you: 'Where did my apple come from?'

 **Activity**

Start a Nature Journal. Children can record elements or events from the natural environment into a shared scrapbook. Children may draw pictures; take or pose for photographs; narrate their experiences of the environment to an educator; or bring in things from home. Children can share their journal entries with others and add to the journal at any time. Journal entries may lead to further conversations or research, such as finding out the name of the flowers growing in the outdoor environment, or finding out the names of different types of birds that live locally.

 **Discussion Point**

How do you define 'nature'?

What does the phrase 'engaging with nature' mean to you?

 **Discussion Point**

How are indoor and outdoor learning environments valued within your service?

Are they valued equally?

How is this reflected in your program and practice?

 **Discussion Point**

Are children often playing in the outdoor environment during peak drop-off and collection times?

How do you use this as an opportunity to discuss or convey the value and importance of outdoor play with children's families?

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Responsible**



 **Scenario**

You have recently introduced a 'bush kinder' to your program where children spend three hours each day at a local nature reserve. The children enjoy 'bush kinder' time and the program has been very well received by families, however one parent is unhappy. She has concerns that the program is 'a waste of time'. She wants to know: 'When will the real learning begin?' She is also worried that her daughter is not learning enough at your service and should be learning skills such as reading, writing and counting. How would you address this parent's concerns?

 **Discussion Point**

Did you engage in 'risky' play experiences as a child? Share some examples and how they may be relevant or adapted to be included in your service.

What steps would you take to identify the risks and benefits and manage/mitigate the identified risks?

 **Discussion Point**

How do you convey the benefits of 'risky' play to families who may be restricting their children from engaging in learning experiences that involve calculated risk?

How do you reassure families about children's safety?

 **Discussion Point**

Research suggests that children are spending less time connecting with nature and playing outdoors.

What could some of the long term impacts of this lack of connection with nature be?

 **Discussion Point**

Nature provides many loose parts that can be used in children's play. Share some examples of how you incorporate elements of nature into your indoor learning environments?

How are the children interacting with these environments?

How could they be adapted or improved on?

 **Discussion Point**

Engaging children in real, meaningful engagements is an important element of quality education and care.

Share some examples of when children have had the opportunity to engage in meaningful projects in the outdoor environment?

 **Discussion Point**

What role-play opportunities are available for children in your service's outdoor environment?

How are children encouraged to explore the roles of community members who work predominantly in the outdoor environment?

Share some examples of what these might be and how you do or could incorporate these.

 **Discussion Point**

Nature can be unpredictable. In ever-changing natural play-spaces, there is always a new element for children to explore and discover.

Share some examples of how children's individual interests in the natural environment are used to inform your program and practice?

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 **Discussion Point**

Does your service regularly organise excursions into the community that promote children's meaningful connections with nature?

Share some examples of what these might be and how they do or could look like in your service.

What might be the challenges and/or benefits of such experiences?

What steps need to be taken to manage/mitigate identified risks?

 **Scenario**

The children in your service have shown an interest in a book about gardening. How could you offer them the chance to sow, nurture, harvest, and consume their own produce?

How could you share excess produce with the community?

How could you compost or recycle scraps from meal times?

How could children be involved in this project and incorporate these sustainability practices into the service?

 **Activity**

Think of your service's current cleaning products and practices. Could they be more environmentally friendly?

What are some practical steps you can take right now, to immediately make a difference?

Consider and plan for some long term changes you can make to improve on sustainable cleaning practices within your service. (These could be included in your Quality Improvement Plan.)

 **Discussion Point**

Are educators involved in any professional development relating to sustainability in your service? Have you considered a 'staff retreat' for your next team-building exercise or professional development?

This may include spending some time together in the natural environment and having dedicated time away from modern technologies to build connections, explore ideas and concepts. It could be as simple as using a local park or reserve as a venue.

 **Discussion Point**

How does your service encourage children to make decisions and participate in actions that contribute towards a sustainable future?

How are children's contributions reflected in your program and practice?

 **Discussion Point**

How would you respond to a child that asks you: 'Where does all the rubbish go?'

 **Discussion Point**

How do you feel about children climbing trees?

Do you consider this a 'risky' activity?

Should children be able to climb trees in an education and care service? What might the challenges and/or benefits be?

What steps need to be taken to manage/mitigate identified risks?

 **Discussion Point**

How does your service currently encourage and support sustainable transport initiatives, such as walking to the service, carpooling or bike-riding?

How could you meaningfully engage with families and seek their ideas and input?

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 **Discussion Point**

Does your service currently engage in any water conservation practices, such as water tanks connected to toilets or irrigation systems; a grey water-treatment system; water-saving fittings on taps; or using contaminant-free waste water to water the garden?

How might your current practices be improved on?

 **Discussion Point**

How would you respond to a child that asks you: 'Where does water come from?'

 **Discussion Point**

Does your service provide food to the children? Is food sourced locally?

What might the challenges and/or benefits of this be?

 **Discussion Point**

How does your service embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the program in meaningful and non-tokenistic ways?

How might these practices be improved on?

 **Activity**

Review your service's policies related to sustainability.

Do your policies cover:

- play and the natural environment?
- cleaning products and waste management?
- community involvement?

Is there potential to enhance or develop these policies further?

Review of this material may inform content for your Quality Improvement Plan.

 **Scenario**

A previously vacant block of land next door to your service has recently started undergoing construction works. The preschool children have taken a great interest in the trees bordering the block – especially a hollow tree that houses a possum and her joeys. Watching the construction machines preparing the block for building, a child cries out: 'They can't cut down those trees! That's where the possum and her babies live!'

How would you respond to this child's concerns?

 **Scenario**

It is proposed that your service introduces reusable hand towels rather than paper towels in the children's bathroom. What are your thoughts on this?

What practical challenges might this present?

How might this practice contribute to sustainability?

 **Discussion Point**

How do you role model sustainable practices in your day-to-day interactions with children?

How will this support children's understanding of sustainable practices?

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Responsible**





Discussion Point

What opportunities does or could your service provide for children to be involved in caring for the local environment?

How might or do you engage with the local community to foster these opportunities?



Discussion Point

A hideout can take many forms, however they all provide a safe haven for children to feel safe and secure. How does your physical environment provide natural hiding places for children?

How do you ensure children are effectively supervised if they have access to natural hideaways?



Discussion Point

How do you support children to understand our present actions have implications for future generations?

How might this differ for the different ages of children?

How can these conversations be undertaken sensitively, building understanding rather than burdening children with guilt and/or responsibility?



Discussion Point

It is important to involve children in regular routines that contribute to the sustainability of your environment.

How are children encouraged to respect and maintain the natural environment at your service?



Discussion Point

How do you apply these philosophies to your service?

Respect: the resources and don't be wasteful.

Rethink: Critically reflect on practices to ensure they are environmentally friendly.

Repurpose: Use items in a different way.

Reduce: your ecological footprint.

Reuse: resources that might otherwise be thrown away.

Recycle: all recyclable materials.



Discussion Point

Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of the following in an education and care service:

- cloth nappies versus disposable nappies
- plastic toys versus wooden toys
- natural grass versus artificial turf.



Discussion Point

How do you respond to children's different perspectives and theories about sustainability issues?

Is it important and necessary to provide in depth, honest responses or protect children from the harsh reality of our limited resources? Why/Why not?

How do you ensure children are not overburdened with responsibility?



Scenario

Your service is in an area currently under drought restrictions. The children do not understand why they can no longer use the water play table or water in the sandpit.

How would you support children's understanding of the issue?

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 **Discussion Point**

How do or could you invite families to contribute to your service's gardening or food growing initiatives?

What are some examples of ways families are, or could be, involved?

 **Discussion Point**

If children bring their own lunch to the service, consider the food packaging that children bring.

How do you try to limit the amount of food packaging brought into your education and care service?

How can you encourage families to reduce the amount of food packaging in their children's lunch boxes?

 **Discussion Point**

List five ways in which your service could or does recycle food scraps?

Are there any ways this can be improved on?

 **Activity**

Collaborate with staff, children and families to create an Eco-Calendar. Jointly decide which environmental events you will celebrate and participate in, such as, 'Clean up Australia Day' or 'Earth Hour'.

You may also like to include some events specific to your service, such as an opening of an edible garden or celebrating the change to environment-friendly cleaning products.

What could be included in the service's Quality Improvement Plan?

 **Discussion Point**

How do or could you facilitate and encourage children to explore the environment, local issues and sustainability through the arts?

 **Activity**

Plan a nature hunt. What interesting items and features could you find in the natural environment of your service?

If the natural environment in your service is limited, consider an excursion to a natural environment in your local community.

 **Discussion Point**

In what ways are children encouraged to consider how the actions of humans may affect Australia's wildlife?

How can possible solutions be explored and discussed with children of different ages?

 **Discussion Point**

In what ways can you support and encourage children to enact change in relation to issues of sustainability?

How can you demonstrate to children that even their seemingly small contributions to a sustainable future can make a difference?

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 **Activity**

Give children the opportunity to discuss and share their thoughts on what they like about nature and what the environment does for them.

Can you think of any creative ways in which you could document, share or display the children's ideas?

 **Discussion Point**

How do or could you have discussions with children about endangered and extinct species?

Do you consider it important for children to understand how and why species become endangered?

 **Discussion Point**

How could or do you discuss the issues of littering or the inappropriate disposal of rubbish with children?

What practices are implemented in your services to guide children?

 **Activity**

Explore the effect of greenhouse gases with children. Naturally occurring greenhouse gases are useful in keeping the Earth's temperature comfortable for the planet's life forms. The increase in greenhouse gases produced by industrialisation is making the Earth too warm. Create an experience to support children's understanding. For example, use several blankets to represent sources of greenhouse gas emissions which could be placed on children's feet or legs, one by one. Children should notice their feet get warmer as blankets are layered on.

 **Activity**

Consider how the outdoor environment could be wildlife-friendly, with habitats with animals to thrive in.

You may wish to:

- plant native trees and other plants to attract native birds
- buy or build a bird bath
- provide hollows and sunbathing spots such as large rocks
- include grassed areas and allow mulch to build up to provide feeding opportunities.

Brainstorm other changes that could be made.

 **Discussion Point**

Children may not know what happens to garbage after they have put it in the bin and it is taken away in a garbage truck.

How could children learn about and explore the process of garbage disposal by your local council?

 **Discussion Point**

How are children aware of the presence and causes of natural disasters that may occur in your community?

If there are precautions that can be taken to minimise the damage and stay protected from such disasters, are these precautions discussed with children?

 **Discussion Point**

If your service caters for children younger than two years of age, how are children of this age group involved in sustainability practices in your service?

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Discussion Point

In what ways does the weather limit children's access to the outdoor environment in your service?

What strategies do or could you implement to ensure children still have access to the natural environment during wet weather?

How might this differ with children of different ages?



Discussion Point

Think about a time when a child asked you a question related to sustainability issues that you didn't know the answer, or perhaps the topic was sensitive and you didn't know the appropriate response.

Share with the group and, together, brainstorm possible ways you could respond to the child.



Discussion Point

Do you feel your experiences in nature as a child have in some way shaped your current relationship and view of nature today?

Share this with the group and discuss how this might impact on practices and the children in your service.

Think about and share both positive and negative influences.



Discussion Point

Using food as a play material, such as in playdough, sensory bins or craft activities, has been a long-standing, common practice for many Australian education and care services. However, food items can hold different meanings in different cultures.

How does your service view the use of food products as play materials? What message do you think this sends to children about sustainable living? If you were to make changes at your service, how might you go about it?



Discussion Point

To meet NQS Element 3.2.3 - The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible - a service must have a worm farm and rainwater tank.

Answer: False. The National Regulations and the National Quality Standard are not prescriptive about the practices and programs needed to meet this Element. Practices should be relevant and meaningful for the children, families, communities and the context of the service.



Multiple Choice

For a service to support children to become environmentally responsible (NQS Element 3.2.3), which of the following practices could be implemented?

- a) Ensure that the service's environmental strategy is being consistently implemented
- b) Increase the children's awareness of the impact of human activity
- c) Increase the children's awareness of the interdependence of living things
- d) **All of the above.**



True or False

Very young children can gain an understanding of environmental responsibility (NQS Element 3.2.3) by observing educators recycling items.

Answer: True. Educators are able to role model sustainable practices to increase children's knowledge of sustainability and environmental responsibility.



Multiple Choice

The concept name for NQS Element 3.2.3 is:

- a) Environmental education
- b) **Environmentally responsible**
- c) Sustainable practices
- d) Children and nature

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True or False

Fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land is one way educators can support children to become environmentally responsible.

Answer: True.
A part of NQS Element 3.2.3.

Discussion Point

What are the agencies in your community that you can source recycled materials from?

Are there others that could be explored?

Are there any recycling organisations that might visit your service and work with the children?

Multiple Choice

Where could you find additional information about sustainable practices applicable to education and care services?

- a) The ACECQA website
- b) Early Childhood Resource Hub – ecrh@edu.au
- c) The Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (ECEEN) website
- d) Cool Australia Learn for Life website <https://www.coolaustralia.org/>
- e) **All of the above**

Discussion Point

Many services undertake a sustainability audit.

Discuss some of the areas that an audit might identify at your service.

Examples of audits can be found at: www.cccinc.org.au/docs/resource-sheet_sustainability-audit-tool-v-2015.pdf

www.coolaustralia.org/activity/sustainability-audit-early-learning/

Consider

Where can you get information about how services in your area have performed (met/not met) against NQS Element 3.2.3?

Consider ways this information could be used to improve or share practice.

Answer: The ACECQA website includes an Excel spreadsheet with assessment and rating information (categorised by service) that could be used to make contact with other services and share ideas, learnings and practices. www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/snapshots

Multiple Choice

In relation to children I will... collaborate with children as global citizens in learning about our shared responsibilities to the environment and humanity.

This statement is drawn from:

- (a) Education and Care Services National Law
- (b) **Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics**
- (c) NQS
- (d) Australia's environmental law.

Discussion Point

Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and *My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* include the learning outcome: Children are connected with and contribute to their world, including:

- Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

Discuss examples in your program, policies and practices that promote this outcome.



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